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ABSTRACT

A study assessed the continuing education needs of Australia's Technical and Further Education (TAFE) senior staff (who were defined as spending 50 percent or more of their time on college administration as opposed to teaching). A literature search, interviews, and submissions were the principal sources of data for the needs assessment. The following were identified as areas in which senior college staff may require further education: planning for the future of the college, staff management, college administration, educational leadership, communications, and additional professional capacities (report writing, time management, industrial relations and laws, the TAFE authority, disturbed students, implementation of government policies, stress management, problem solving, and computer literacy). It was recommended that every TAFE teacher, including senior college staff members, be involved in a continuing and individual staff development program, that provision be made for regular confidential performance appraisals for all college staff members throughout their careers, that individualized staff development programs be provided, and that special consideration in staff development programs be given to underrepresented groups. (MN)

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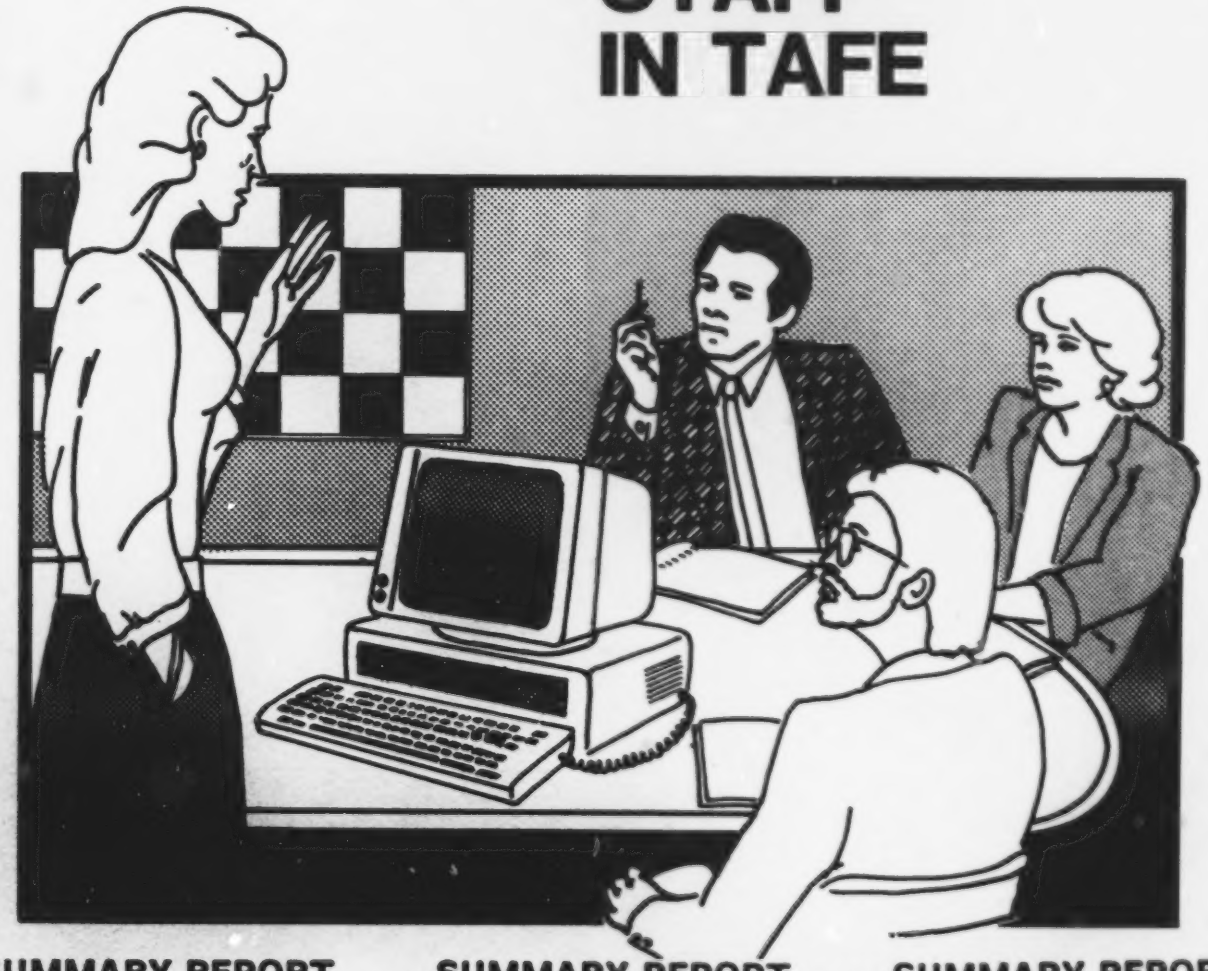
THE CONTINUING EDUCATION NEEDS OF ACADEMIC STAFF: SENIOR COLLEGE STAFF IN TAFE



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SUMMARY REPORT ... SUMMARY REPORT ... SUMMARY REPORT

Pauline Mageean

SUMMARY REPORT

The continuing education needs of academic staff: senior college staff in TAFE

Pauline Mageean

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SUMMARY REPORT

This report is one of three parts of a major project conducted by the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development into the initial and continuing education needs of full-time TAFE college staff.

A literature search, interviews and submissions were used to discover the needs of TAFE college senior staff who were defined as those spending 50% or more of their time on college administration as opposed to teaching. The same important areas in which senior staff may require further development were listed consistently, and could form the basis of an organised and consistent program of senior staff development.

Naturally not all senior staff will require expertise in the same areas, and each will have individual competencies and weaknesses. It must be stressed that staff development needs will change, that those areas which are seen as important today, may be much less so in a few years when new areas may arise. TAFE is continually adapting to a changing environment, both internal and external, and the role and emphases of its senior staff must change accordingly. As TAFE will be far more efficient and effective if it is prepared for changes rather than reacting to crises, it is essential that staff development be, as far as possible, proactive. For it to be so, research must be undertaken to discover the likely future directions TAFE may take, and the implications of this. The TAFE National Centre and the National Training Council jointly ran a conference on 'The Changing Context of TAFE' (November 1985) which brought together speakers from many areas to exchange ideas and information. Many of the projects undertaken by the Centre have implications for the staff development of senior staff. Staff development units, through their TAFE authorities might consider submitting proposals to the Centre for further activities or research in this area.

AREAS IN WHICH COLLEGE STAFF CURRENTLY MAY REQUIRE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

1. <u>Planning for the future of the college</u>

(a) Corporate planning
(b) Rational decision making - setting policy priorities
(c) Analysis of community needs
(d) Understanding of likely future developments in TAFE

(e) Understanding, but not necessarily in-depth knowledge, of new technologies
(f) Anticipating change, both as an individual and assisting the whole college to adapt to new issues in TAFE (e.g. increasing numbers of young, full-time students; equal opportunities issues)
(g) Organisational management
(h) Goal setting

2. Managing Staff

(a) Committee management skills
(b) Motivating staff
(c) Encouraging the professional development of college staff
(d) Delegation
(e) Conflict resolution
(f) Planning and managing change, dealing with new issues in TAFE
(g) Team skills
(h) Organisational and group dynamics
(i) Maintaining good industrial relations
(j) Creating a good 'working climate'

3. College administration

(a) Financial management, budgeting
(b) Decision making
(c) Relationship of the college with the TAFE authority
(d) Business practices
(e) Day to day running of the college
(f) Entrepreneurship

4. Educational leadership

(a) Keeping up-to-date with relevant developments in education
(b) Encouraging staff development
(c) Developing within self, and staff, a vision of TAFE
(d) Providing a role model for staff and students
(e) Setting realistic standards
(f) Accountability for educational matters
(g) Clearly enunciated educational philosophy
(h) Encouraging innovation

5. **Communications**

(a) Communication skills - person to person, group, telephone, public speaking, written communication
(b) Developing links with:

- . community;
- . industry;
- . other educational institutions;
- . TAFE - head office and other colleges;
- . students;
- . colleagues;

(c) Acting as an advocate for the college, seeking funding, etc.
(d) Public relations skills including dealing with media
(e) Negotiation skills
(f) Information systems data base
(g) Assertiveness training

6. **Additional professional capacities**

(a) Preparing reports, submissions, etc.
(b) Management of time
(c) Understanding of industrial relations and laws
(d) Understanding of the whole TAFE authority
(e) Dealing with disturbed students - traumas or deviant behaviour. Principal may have to deal with most serious cases
(f) Interpreting and implementing Government policies
(g) Stress management
(h) Interviewing skills
(i) Problem solving
(j) Computer literacy

To be most effective, staff development should be integrated into, and consistent with, TAFE policy, strategic planning and management. The components of staff development provision should complement each other - some programs would be prerequisites for others, while completing certain programs might gain credit towards another program. For example, a workshop in the college might be credited towards a degree course run by another organisation. To be effective, staff development must be seen to have more than just token support from those at the very top of the directorate and requires the commitment of substantial resources of both time and money. To achieve credibility among TAFE teachers it is crucial that

the staff development system and its key elements such as performance appraisal and individual staff development programs are incorporated in the authority's and the individual college's corporate plans and in any management information systems.

Staff development programs offered to senior staff need to be comprehensive in content and varied in format to meet the diverse requirements, learning styles and professional situations of TAFE senior staff, both in the present and the foreseeable future. Professional development must be ongoing throughout each teacher's career from the beginning of teaching until retirement. It is essential that these programs be co-ordinated to ensure that all important professional needs of TAFE senior staff are met in an efficient, economical and systematic way.

There is considerable concern among TAFE senior college staff about their staff development. Many feel that their comparatively small numbers, and the fact that they are already in very senior positions, means that their special staff development needs are often overlooked. There is a strong case for co-ordinating available resources on a national basis, to avoid duplication, to share the most successful programs, to help overcome isolation of some senior officers and to encourage the exchange of ideas among senior staff across Australia. This report recommends the creation of an annotated catalogue of the staff development provision already available to senior staff in Australia. This should be accessible on all TAFE computer systems. Ideally one of the staff development units could offer to co-ordinate staff development activities for senior staff on a national basis.

As TAFE responds to a constantly changing environment, every TAFE teacher, from appointment to retirement, should be involved in a continuous process of professional development. Each officer has unique experiences and abilities, and works in a different environment depending upon his/her position, institution and TAFE authority. So each person should have his/her combination of staff development items which will form an individual development program. In order to plan this individual program, which should be incorporated within a career path, it is necessary that the officer have some means of evaluating his or her professional strengths and weaknesses. Several confidential performance appraisal models are discussed in this report.

TAFE senior staff are under heavy pressures of time and work. This means that programs provided for their educational development must be of a high standard (they must feel the gain warrants the pain), accessible (some choice of when, where and how it will be provided to suit individual situations, preferences and learning styles), flexible (to allow senior staff to select the particular items relevant to individual needs and requirements) and appropriate (dealing with the known concerns of senior staff at a level appropriate for the individual. Some material may be appropriate only for very senior staff who are able to draw upon considerable experience when undertaking the program; other material could be part of an induction course for new appointees).

Where appropriate, senior staff from outside TAFE - schools, higher education, the public service and industry - should be invited to participate in, and contribute to, TAFE staff development activities. This will broaden the perspective of TAFE staff and provide new insights and management methods, while fostering valuable networks and mutual understanding. Although all TAFE authorities do this to some degree, much more could be done to promote this interaction.

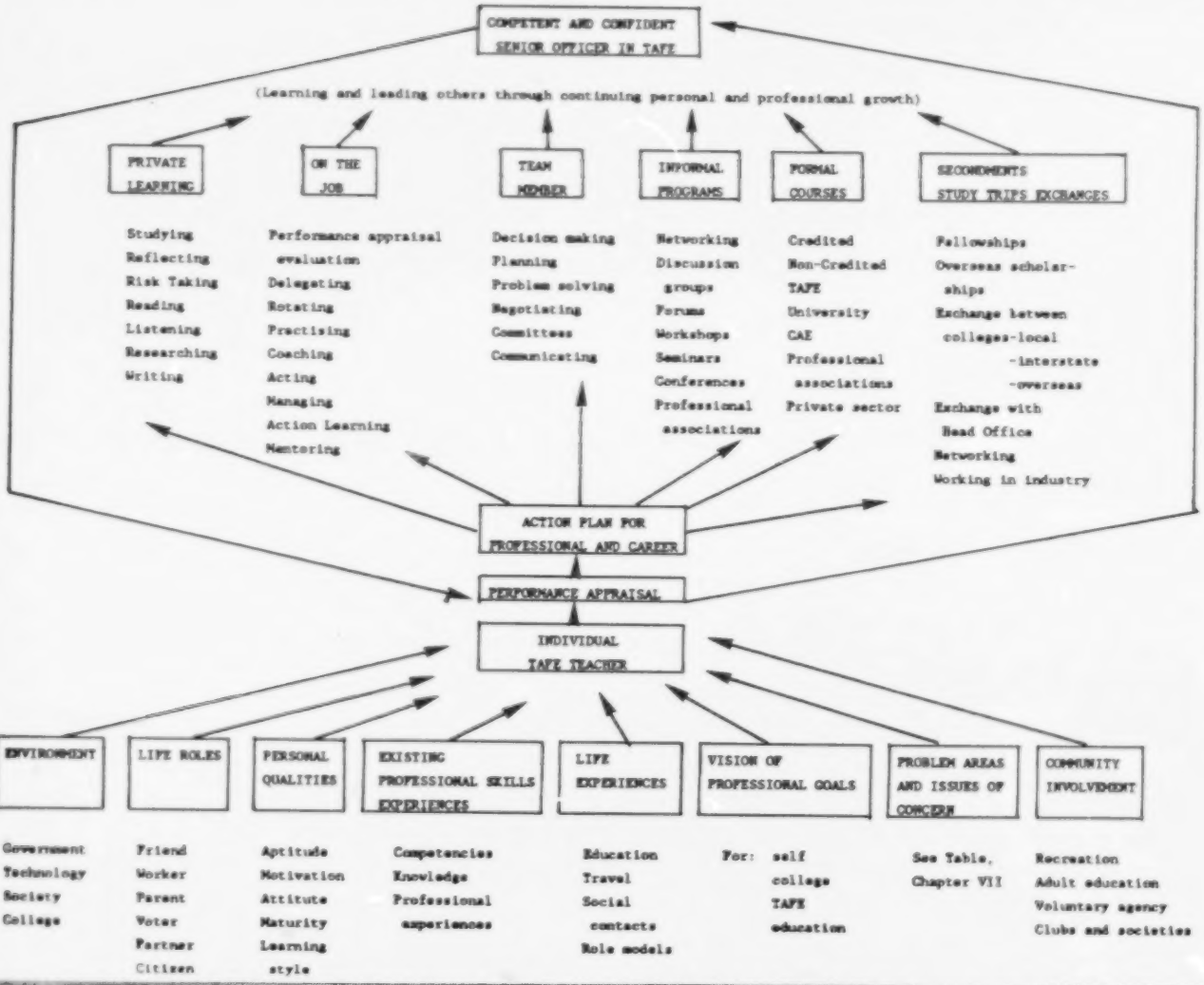
Staff development programs should be monitored to ensure that they are kept up-to-date, and that where appropriate, new staff development activities are organised quickly to respond to rapid change and outmoded provision is either updated or discarded. It is crucial that staff development be as far as possible pro-active, anticipating TAFE's future needs and preparing staff to adapt to these needs.

Senior staff are the educational leaders of their colleges. Thus the success of TAFE depends very much on the expertise with which they carry out their many duties. To perform well senior staff require support:

(a) by having access to the best possible staff development;
(b) clerical or technological support to enable them to undertake this staff development;
(c) a special financial commitment from the government to ensure that (a) and (b) can occur.

Successful staff development is not something that happens to staff members; their active involvement in, and 'ownership of' their staff development is crucial to its success. Senior staff should be given guidance, support, information and time to participate in an assessment of their own strengths and weaknesses, and to devise and work through an action plan for their own professional development.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAFE SENIOR STAFF



RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) Every TAFE teacher, including senior college staff members, must be involved in a continuing and individual staff development program. Participation in some form of staff development each year should be a professional expectation of all TAFE teachers and written into their duty statements.

(2) Both the TAFE authority and the staff member should be required to contribute time to the professional development of the staff member.

(3) Provision should be made for regular, confidential performance appraisal for all college staff throughout their careers. This particular appraisal is to be used for staff development purposes only, not for selecting officers for promotion.

(4) A means should be established of co-ordinating information about that staff development provision which is relevant to senior staff nationally.

(5) A higher degree course designed for, and to a significant extent by, TAFE senior staff from all TAFE authorities, should be made available externally and part-time.

(6) Individualised staff development programs should be provided giving choice amongst a variety of modes of delivery which should include distance education whenever possible. Group interaction and networking should be fostered.

(7) The special needs of under-represented groups must be taken into consideration when staff development activities are being devised.

(8) Special consideration should be given to under-represented groups when places are allocated in staff development activities to ensure that as many as possible of those eligible to do the program are included.

(9) The content of staff development provision should be monitored to ensure that current needs are being met, and future needs anticipated, by updating or changing outmoded programs.